

Meeting Date:

Agenda Item No. 15

Agenda Item: Funding for WMA pheasant program and HIP. Approved by: _____

Prepared by: Don Kemner

Background:

- Pheasant stocking on WMAs in the 1990's was a minor activity @ 5,000 pheasants released and a cost of \$56,000/yr.
- In 2000, JFAC directed department to spend \$150,000 from HIP to augment pheasant stocking on WMAs.
- Pheasants are now stocked on 9 WMAs at a cost exceeding \$250,000.
- Pheasant hunting on WMAs is very popular and accounts for 20% of statewide activity. Access Yes is not providing much pheasant hunting access except in Clearwater where pheasants are not stocked.
- Cost of birds (\$200,000+) has increased well beyond funds generated by sale of WMA permits (\$120,000+).
- Current HIP funding (\$600,000) is fully utilized and any savings realized from pheasant stocking will increase capacity for habitat developments.

Policy issues:

- Provide opportunities specific to the needs of beginners, youth, people with disabilities and families is a strategy of Department's Compass.
- Use artificial stocking where appropriate and cost effective is a strategy of Department's Compass.
- Support mentoring programs for new hunters is a strategy of Department's Compass.
- Assess participation, demand, and satisfaction with hunting opportunities. Adjust management to achieve objectives is strategy of Department's Compass.
- Provide incentives and assistance to landowners to improve habitat on private lands is strategy of Department's Compass.
- How do we strike the appropriate balance between releasing pheasants on WMAs and working offset to produce wild pheasants and hunting access to accommodate the increasing number of people living in Idaho?

Public Involvement Process:

- Random sample of WMA pheasant permit buyers.
- Random sample of hunting license buyers.
- Internet based survey.
- Competitive bids for purchase of pheasants.

Justification:

- The price per bird increased 32-69 percent compared to price per bird in 2006. Prices varied dependent upon the delivery distance to the WMAs.
- Youth pheasant season provides opportunity to mentor new hunters.
- Pheasant hunting activities and cost per bird in the bag varies greatly between WMAs.
- Landowner request for HIP financial assistance is beyond current HIP funding level.

Action Requested:

Endorse Department recommendation.

Staff Recommendations:

Develop some efficiencies and reduce stocking numbers to bring the cost down to \$200,000 and adjust future budgets to cover inflationary costs.